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## BLACKFOOT INDIAN LEGENDS.

THE dwellers in the western lodges have many legends relating to places of historical interest in the country, and these throw a flood of light on the religious ideas, migrations, social and domestic customs, political life, and other matters of interest connected with the tribes comprising the Blackfoot Confederacy. Some of the legends are local, and, when told by the aged men as they sit around their camp-fires, vary somewhat in detail, according to the intellectual ability, inventiveness, and strength of memory of the narrator. I have listened to some of these legends as told, over and over again, for the past nine years, and I find that the young men are not able to relate them as accurately as the aged; besides, as the country is becoming settled with white people, they are less disposed to tell to others their native religious ideas, lest they are laughed at, because of not believing the same things as their superior brethren of the white race. As the children grow up, they are forgetting these things, and the years are not far distant, when the folk-lore of the Blackfeet will be greatly changed, and many of their traditions forgotten.

## THE LEGEND OF SHEEP CREEK.

Napioa, which means "The Old Man," who is the Secondary Creator of the Blackfeet, was travelling one day with the Kit-fox, near Sheep Creek, which is located about twenty-five miles south of Calgary, in the Provisional District of Alberta. As they travelled together they saw a large rock, and Napioa felt constrained to make an offering of his robe to it. He presented the robe and, with the Kit-fox as his companion, departed. He had not proceeded far upon the way, when, perceiving that it was going to rain, he told his companion to return, and ask the rock to give him back his robe, as he was afraid of being drenched with the rain. The rock refused to give the robe to the Kit-fox, and then Napioa, becoming angry, said, "That old rock has been there for a long time and never had a robe. It has always been poor. I will go back myself and take away my robe."

He returned and took the robe by force, and then the rock became very angry, and followed them, determined to punish them. Napioa fled southward toward High River, and the Kit-fox, anxious for his own safety, hid in a hole in the ground. Napioa saw an old buffalo bull, and he called to him for help; but when the buffalo came to his rescue, the rock ran over him and crushed him to death. Then two bears came to help Napioa, and they too were killed by the

rock. Two small birds, with very large strong bills, came to help him, and they attacked the rock, breaking off pieces from it, as they suddenly pounced upon it, and then flew upward. In a short time they killed the rock, and Napioa was saved. The Indians then named the stream "Oqkotokseetuqta, the Rock Creek, or Stony Creek," but it is called by the white people at the present day, "Sheep Creek."

#### LEGEND OF TONGUE CREEK.

Tongue Creek is situated between Sheep Creek and High River, about nine miles south of Sheep Creek. In the distant past Napioa was travelling in the vicinity of Tongue Creek, when he espied a band of elk sporting themselves on its banks. They came to a place where the bank was steep, and they all leaped down, seeking a sandy resting-place in the bed of the stream. Napioa reached the creek, and, lighting a piece of wood, he threw the firebrand over the bank. The elk heard him, and asked him what he wanted. "Oh," said he, "I was laughing when you spoke to me, and I could not answer; but that is a very nice spot down there, and I want to go down, for there is abundance of beautiful clean sand." When the elk saw the firebrand they became frightened, and, rushing headlong over each other, broke their necks. A single young elk escaped, but Napioa said, "Never mind, there are many more elk in the country; that one can go." Napioa pitched his lodge, and erected a pole with a flag upon it. He skinned the elk, filled his lodge with the meat, and made preparations to camp there and have a feast. While thus engaged, a coyote entered his lodge and asked him for something to eat, but he would not give any. He noticed that the coyote had on a necklace of shells, and said he, "If you will give me that necklace, I will give you something to eat." The coyote replied, "I cannot do that, for this is my medicine (amulet) and it is very strong." Napioa then said, "Well, I will run a race with you, and if you beat me I will give you some of the meat." But the coyote refused, and as he did so he held up a bandaged foot, and said, "I cannot run for I am lame!" and the two went off together, the coyote protesting that he had a sore foot, and could not run. He managed to get Napioa a long distance from the lodge, and then quickly unloosing the bandage from his foot, he ran back to the lodge. Napioa followed, a long distance behind, shouting, "Save me some of the meat!" When the coyote reached the lodge, he called aloud for his fellow coyotes, who speedily came and devoured all the meat. Napioa had placed the tongues upon the top of the pole, but a mouse ran up the pole and ate them all. When Napioa found that the meat was all gone he said, "Then I will have the

tongues, for the coyote could not get them." But as he took down the remaining portions, he threw them away, saying, "They are not good!" The Indians call this creek "Matsinawustam, The Tongue Flag," but the white people call it "Tongue Creek."

#### LEGEND OF RED COULEE.

There lies in a "coulee" near the Marias River, on the road that leads from Macleod to Benton, a large "medicine stone," venerated by the Indians belonging to the Blackfoot Confederacy. The "coulee" is named by the Indians the "Red Coulee." When the Blackfeet came from the north, the Snake Indians, who at that time inhabited the country, told the Blackfeet that there was a large medicine stone on the top of a hill, close to a ravine.

Several years after they were told this, a Blackfoot chief with fifty men went southward on the war-path. They all went to this stone, and the chief, being sceptical about the mysterious powers possessed by it, laughed at his men for exhibiting such childishness as to believe in it. In derision he hurled the stone down the mountain-side into the ravine, and then departed. They engaged in a battle with some Indians in the South, and all of them were killed, only one man returning to tell the fate of his comrades.

Ever since that time the Indians have called the place the "Red Coulee," and as they travel to and fro, they never forget to go there and present their offerings, to insure safety in battle and protection by the way.

#### LEGEND OF THE RED STONE.

On the river flat at the mouth of one of the ravines at Lethbridge, and not many yards distant from the coal mine, lies a stone, which oftentimes I have seen painted, and surrounded by numerous Indian trinkets, which had been offered to it by the Indians. The Blood Indians call it "Mikiotouqse;" that is the Red Stone. Tradition states that a long time ago, a young man lay down beside this stone, and fell asleep, and as he lay there he dreamed that the stone spoke to him, and said, "Am I the Red Stone?" And the young man said, "Yes, you are the Red Stone." When he awoke, he felt that this must be a mysterious stone, that could thus converse with him, and he made offerings to it. Until the present day these offerings are made, the Indians believing that by giving to it reverence they will be blessed in all things that concern them in this life.

*John McLean.*

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